

Ug 4
 X-100 2
 E.Q. MCCARTHY

36,544

Central Intelligence Unit Needs an Overseeing Eye

Shortly after the 87th Congress convenes on Wednesday the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Sen. J. W. Fulbright, Arkansas Democrat, will decide when to hold hearings on a pending joint resolution to create a Senate-House committee on foreign intelligence. This would seem to come under the head of the "It's About Time Dept."

When the committee gets up a full head of steam, echoes of last spring's disastrous invasion of Cuba will be heard on Capitol Hill. Because the Central Intelligence Agency pulled the strings in that attempt to topple Castro's dictatorship, and because the attempt failed, new life has been injected into an old proposal to subject this super-secret arm of the federal government to a degree of congressional supervision.

The committee is going to put down for a public hearing a resolution sponsored by Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, Minnesota Democrat, and cosponsored by 18 other Democratic senators and three Republicans. The resolution, introduced shortly after the anti-Castro fiasco met disaster at the Bay of Pigs last April, would establish a joint congressional committee to exercise "any kind of continuing supervision over foreign policy activities and foreign intelligence programs."

The proposal is not without opposition. Sen. Carl Hayden, Arizona Democrat, after the Senate rejected a similar proposal five years ago, declared that "Congress has no right to regulate an agency designed to provide the President with information to enable him to make decisions."

Considerable concern also has been expressed that the establishment of such a committee lead to disclosure by members of Congress of information that should be held secret. Yet the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, on which the proposed new legislation would be patterned, has functioned satisfactorily in another highly sensitive field.

Dissatisfaction with the CIA's performance in the Cuban affair and growing uneasiness over the agency's participation in undercover operations of that character, may win the present proposal for congressional oversight of foreign intelligence activities a more sympathetic hearing than it received in 1958. Everyone recognizes that effective intelligence-gathering activities are vital to the security of the United States. But whether an intelligence agency also should engage in freewheeling paramilitary operations that may, if unsuccessful, gravely compromise the country's position and prestige seems to us to be highly doubtful.

It is understood that, after the Cuban invasion, both the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and a special board of inquiry headed by Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor recommended that the conduct of paramilitary operations be turned over to the Defense Department.

In any event, most Americans probably have concluded, from the Cuban fiasco, that at least the work of the CIA should come under review by others in the government. All wisdom in this field surely does not lie within the confines of this single agency.